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# THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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TORONTO



# THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

BY  
W. B. YEATS

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1919

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## PREFACE

THIS book is, in part, a reprint of *The Wild Swans at Coole*, printed a year ago on my sister's hand-press at Dundrum, Co. Dublin. I have not, however, reprinted a play which may be a part of a book of new plays suggested by the dance plays of Japan, and I have added a number of new poems. Michael Robartes and John Aherne, whose names occur in one or other of these, are characters in some stories I wrote years ago, who have once again become a part of the phantasmagoria through which I can alone express my convictions about the world. I have the fancy

that I read the name John Aherne among those of men prosecuted for making a disturbance at the first production of "The Play Boy," which may account for his animosity to myself.

W. B. Y.

BALLYLEE, CO. GALWAY,

*September 1918.*

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE . . . .	1
IN MEMORY OF MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY .	4
AN IRISH AIRMAN FORESEES HIS DEATH .	13
MEN IMPROVE WITH THE YEARS . . . .	14
THE COLLAR-BONE OF A HARE . . . .	15
UNDER THE ROUND TOWER . . . . .	17
SOLOMON TO SHEBA . . . . .	19
THE LIVING BEAUTY . . . . .	21
A SONG . . . . .	22
TO A YOUNG BEAUTY . . . . .	23
TO A YOUNG GIRL . . . . .	24
THE SCHOLARS . . . . .	25
TOM O'ROUGHLEY . . . . .	26
THE SAD SHEPHERD . . . . .	27
LINES WRITTEN IN DEJECTION . . . .	39

	PAGE
THE DAWN . . . . .	40
ON WOMAN . . . . .	41
THE FISHERMAN . . . . .	44
THE HAWK . . . . .	46
MEMORY . . . . .	47
HER PRAISE . . . . .	48
THE PEOPLE . . . . .	50
HIS PHOENIX . . . . .	54
A THOUGHT FROM PROPERTIUS . . . . .	58
BROKEN DREAMS . . . . .	59
A DEEP-SWORN VOW . . . . .	63
PRESENCES . . . . .	64
THE BALLOON OF THE MIND . . . . .	66
TO A SQUIRREL AT KYLE-NA-GNO . . . . .	67
ON BEING ASKED FOR A WAR POEM . . . . .	68
IN MEMORY OF ALFRED POLLEXFEN . . . . .	69
UPON A DYING LADY . . . . .	72
EGO DOMINUS TUUS . . . . .	79
A PRAYER ON GOING INTO MY HOUSE . . . . .	86
THE PHASES OF THE MOON . . . . .	88
THE CAT AND THE MOON . . . . .	102

# CONTENTS

ix

	PAGE
THE SAINT AND THE HUNCHBACK . . .	104
TWO SONGS OF A FOOL . . . .	106
ANOTHER SONG OF A FOOL . . . .	108
THE DOUBLE VISION OF MICHAEL ROBARTES	108
NOTE . . . . .	115





## THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

THE trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky ;  
Upon the brimming water among the  
stones  
Are nine and fifty swans.

The nineteenth Autumn has come upon  
me  
Since I first made my count ;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount  
And scatter wheeling in great broken  
rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.

## 2 THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

I have looked upon those brilliant  
creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my  
head,  
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold,  
Companionable streams or climb the  
air ;  
Their hearts have not grown old ;  
Passion or conquest, wander where  
they will,  
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still  
water  
Mysterious, beautiful ;

## THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE 3

Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes, when I awake  
some day  
To find they have flown away?

IN MEMORY OF  
MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

1

Now that we're almost settled in our  
house

I'll name the friends that cannot sup  
with us

Beside a fire of turf in the ancient  
tower,

And having talked to some late  
hour

Climb up the narrow winding stair to  
bed :

Discoverers of forgotten truth

Or mere companions of my youth,

All, all are in my thoughts to-night,  
being dead.

MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY 5

2

Always we'd have the new friend meet  
the old,  
And we are hurt if either friend seem  
cold,  
And there is salt to lengthen out the  
smart  
In the affections of our heart,  
And quarrels are blown up upon that  
head ;  
But not a friend that I would bring  
This night can set us quarrelling,  
For all that come into my mind are  
dead.

3

Lionel Johnson comes the first to mind,  
That loved his learning better than  
mankind,  
Though courteous to the worst ; much  
falling he  
Brooded upon sanctity

## 6 MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

Till all his Greek and Latin learning  
    seemed  
A long blast upon the horn that  
    brought  
A little nearer to his thought  
A measureless consummation that he  
    dreamed.

### 4

And that enquiring man John Synge  
    comes next,  
That dying chose the living world for  
    text  
And never could have rested in the  
    tomb  
But that, long travelling, he had  
    come  
Towards nightfall upon certain set  
    apart  
In a most desolate stony place,  
Towards nightfall upon a race  
Passionate and simple like his heart.

## MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY 7

### 5

And then I think of old George  
Pollexfen,  
In muscular youth well known to  
Mayo men  
For horsemanship at meets or at race-  
courses,  
That could have shown how purebred  
horses  
And solid men, for all their passion, live  
But as the outrageous stars incline  
By opposition, square and trine;  
Having grown sluggish and contem-  
plative.

### 6

They were my close companions many  
a year,  
A portion of my mind and life, as it  
were,  
And now their breathless faces seem  
to look

## 8 MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

Out of some old picture-book ;  
I am accustomed to their lack of  
    breath,  
But not that my dear friend's dear son,  
Our Sidney and our perfect man,  
Could share in that discourtesy of  
    death.

### 7

For all things the delighted eye now  
    sees  
Were loved by him ; the old storm-  
    broken trees  
That cast their shadows upon road  
    and bridge ;  
The tower set on the stream's edge ;  
The ford where drinking cattle make  
    a stir  
Nightly, and startled by that sound  
The water-hen must change her  
    ground ;  
He might have been your heartiest  
    welcomer.



## MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY 9

### 8

When with the Galway foxhounds he  
would ride  
From Castle Taylor to the Rox-  
borough side  
Or Esserkelly plain, few kept his  
pace ;  
At Mooneen he had leaped a place  
So perilous that half the astonished  
meet  
Had shut their eyes, and where  
was it  
He rode a race without a bit ?  
And yet his mind outran the horses'  
feet.

### 9

We dreamed that a great painter had  
been born  
To cold Clare rock and Galway rock  
and thorn,

## 10 MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

To that stern colour and that delicate  
line

That are our secret discipline  
Wherein the gazing heart doubles her  
might.

Soldier, scholar, horseman, he,  
And yet he had the intensity  
To have published all to be a world's  
delight.

## 10

What other could so well have coun-  
selled us

In all lovely intricacies of a house  
As he that practised or that under-  
stood

All work in metal or in wood,  
In moulded plaster or in carven stone?  
Soldier, scholar, horseman, he,  
And all he did done perfectly  
As though he had but that one trade  
alone.

## MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY 11

### 11

Some burn damp fagots, others may  
consume  
The entire combustible world in one  
small room  
As though dried straw, and if we turn  
about  
The bare chimney is gone black out  
Because the work had finished in that  
flare.  
Soldier, scholar, horseman, he,  
As 'twere all life's epitome.  
What made us dream that he could  
comb grey hair?

### 12

I had thought, seeing how bitter is  
that wind  
That shakes the shutter, to have  
brought to mind

## 12 MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

All those that manhood tried, or child-  
hood loved,  
Or boyish intellect approved,  
With some appropriate commentary  
on each ;  
Until imagination brought  
A fitter welcome ; but a thought  
Of that late death took all my heart  
for speech.

## AN IRISH AIRMAN FORESEES HIS DEATH

I KNOW that I shall meet my fate  
Somewhere among the clouds above ;  
Those that I fight I do not hate  
Those that I guard I do not love ;  
My country is Kiltartan Cross,  
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,  
No likely end could bring them loss  
Or leave them happier than before.  
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,  
Nor public man, nor angry crowds,  
A lonely impulse of delight  
Drove to this tumult in the clouds ;  
I balanced all, brought all to mind,  
The years to come seemed waste of  
breath,  
A waste of breath the years behind  
In balance with this life, this death.

## MEN IMPROVE WITH THE YEARS

I AM worn out with dreams ;  
A weather-worn, marble triton  
Among the streams ;  
And all day long I look  
Upon this lady's beauty  
As though I had found in book  
A pictured beauty,  
Pleased to have filled the eyes  
Or the discerning ears,  
Delighted to be but wise,  
For men improve with the years ;  
And yet and yet  
Is this my dream, or the truth ?  
O would that we had met  
When I had my burning youth ;  
But I grow old among dreams,  
A weather-worn, marble triton  
Among the streams.

## THE COLLAR-BONE OF A HARE

WOULD I could cast a sail on the water  
Where many a king has gone  
And many a king's daughter,  
And alight at the comely trees and the  
lawn,  
The playing upon pipes and the dancing,  
And learn that the best thing is  
To change my loves while dancing  
And pay but a kiss for a kiss.

I would find by the edge of that water  
The collar-bone of a hare  
Worn thin by the lapping of water,  
And pierce it through with a gimlet  
and stare

## 16 COLLAR-BONE OF A HARE

At the old bitter world where they  
    marry in churches,  
And laugh over the untroubled water  
At all who marry in churches,  
Through the white thin bone of a hare.



## UNDER THE ROUND TOWER

‘ALTHOUGH I’d lie lapped up in linen  
A deal I’d sweat and little earn  
If I should live as live the neighbours,’  
Cried the beggar, Billy Byrne;  
‘Stretch bones till the daylight come  
On great-grandfather’s battered tomb.’

Upon a grey old battered tombstone  
In Glendalough beside the stream,  
Where the O’Byrnes and Byrnes are  
buried,  
He stretched his bones and fell in a  
dream  
Of sun and moon that a good hour  
Bellowed and pranced in the round  
tower;

## 18 UNDER THE ROUND TOWER

Of golden king and silver lady,  
Bellowing up and bellowing round,  
Till toes mastered a sweet measure,  
Mouth mastered a sweet sound,  
Prancing round and prancing up  
Until they pranced upon the top.

That golden king and that wild lady  
Sang till stars began to fade,  
Hands gripped in hands, toes close  
together,  
Hair spread on the wind they made;  
That lady and that golden king  
Could like a brace of blackbirds sing.

‘It’s certain that my luck is broken,’  
That rambling jailbird Billy said;  
‘Before nightfall I’ll pick a pocket  
And snug it in a feather-bed,  
I cannot find the peace of home  
On great-grandfather’s battered tomb.’

## SOLOMON TO SHEBA

SANG Solomon to Sheba,  
And kissed her dusky face,  
'All day long from mid-day  
We have talked in the one place,  
All day long from shadowless noon  
We have gone round and round  
In the narrow theme of love  
Like an old horse in a pound.'

To Solomon sang Sheba,  
Planted on his knees,  
'If you had broached a matter  
That might the learned please,  
You had before the sun had thrown  
Our shadows on the ground  
Discovered that my thoughts, not it,  
Are but a narrow pound.'

## 20      SOLOMON TO SHEBA

Sang Solomon to Sheba,  
And kissed her Arab eyes,  
'There's not a man or woman  
Born under the skies  
Dare match in learning with us two,  
And all day long we have found  
There's not a thing but love can make  
The world a narrow pound.'

## THE LIVING BEAUTY

I'LL say and maybe dream I have  
drawn content —  
Seeing that time has frozen up the  
blood,  
The wick of youth being burned and  
the oil spent —  
From beauty that is cast out of a  
mould  
In bronze, or that in dazzling marble  
appears,  
Appears, and when we have gone is  
gone again,  
Being more indifferent to our solitude  
Than 'twere an apparition. O heart,  
we are old,  
The living beauty is for younger men,  
We cannot pay its tribute of wild tears.

## A SONG

I THOUGHT no more was needed  
Youth to prolong  
Than dumb-bell and foil  
To keep the body young.  
Oh, who could have foretold  
That the heart grows old?

Though I have many words,  
What woman's satisfied,  
I am no longer faint  
Because at her side?  
Oh, who could have foretold  
That the heart grows old?

I have not lost desire  
But the heart that I had,  
I thought 'twould burn my body  
Laid on the death-bed.  
But who could have foretold  
That the heart grows old?

## TO A YOUNG BEAUTY

DEAR fellow-artist, why so free  
With every sort of company,  
With every Jack and Jill?  
Choose your companions from the best;  
Who draws a bucket with the rest  
Soon topples down the hill.

You may, that mirror for a school,  
Be passionate, not bountiful  
As common beauties may,  
Who were not born to keep in trim  
With old Ezekiel's cherubim  
But those of Beaujolet.

I know what wages beauty gives,  
How hard a life her servant lives,  
Yet praise the winters gone;  
There is not a fool can call me friend,  
And I may dine at journey's end  
With Landor and with Donne.

## TO A YOUNG GIRL

MY dear, my dear, I know  
More than another  
What makes your heart beat so ;  
Not even your own mother  
Can know it as I know,  
Who broke my heart for her  
When the wild thought,  
That she denies  
And has forgot,  
Set all her blood astir  
And glittered in her eyes.



## THE SCHOLARS

BALD heads forgetful of their sins,  
Old, learned, respectable bald heads  
Edit and annotate the lines  
That young men, tossing on their beds,  
Rhymed out in love's despair  
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.

They'll cough in the ink to the world's  
end ;

Wear out the carpet with their shoes  
Earning respect ; have no strange  
friend ;

If they have sinned nobody knows.  
Lord, what would they say  
Should their Catullus walk that way ?

## TOM O'ROUGHLEY

'THOUGH logic choppers rule the town,  
And every man and maid and boy  
Has marked a distant object down,  
An aimless joy is a pure joy,'  
Or so did Tom O'Roughley say  
That saw the surges running by,  
'And wisdom is a butterfly  
And not a gloomy bird of prey.

'If little planned is little sinned  
But little need the grave distress.  
What's dying but a second wind?  
How but in zigzag wantonness  
Could trumpeter Michael be so brave?'  
Or something of that sort he said,  
'And if my dearest friend were dead  
I'd dance a measure on his grave.'

## THE SAD SHEPHERD

### SHEPHERD

THAT cry's from the first cuckoo of  
the year  
I wished before it ceased.

### GOATHERD

Nor bird nor beast  
Could make me wish for anything this  
day,  
Being old, but that the old alone might  
die,  
And that would be against God's  
Providence.  
Let the young wish. But what has  
brought you here?  
Never until this moment have we met

## 28 THE SAD SHEPHERD

Where my goats browse on the scarce  
grass or leap  
From stone to stone.

### SHEPHERD

I am looking for strayed sheep ;  
Something has troubled me and in  
my trouble  
I let them stray. I thought of rhyme  
alone,  
For rhyme can beat a measure out  
of trouble  
And make the daylight sweet once  
more ; but when  
I had driven every rhyme into its  
place  
The sheep had gone from theirs.

### GOATHERD

I know right well  
What turned so good a shepherd from  
his charge.

## THE SAD SHEPHERD 29

### SHEPHERD

He that was best in every country  
sport  
And every country craft, and of us  
all  
Most courteous to slow age and hasty  
youth  
Is dead.

### GOATHERD

The boy that brings my griddle  
cake  
Brought the bare news.

### SHEPHERD

He had thrown the crook away  
And died in the great war beyond the  
sea.

### GOATHERD

He had often played his pipes among  
my hills

## 30 THE SAD SHEPHERD

And when he played it was their  
loneliness,  
The exultation of their stone, that cried  
Under his fingers.

### SHEPHERD

I had it from his mother,  
And his own flock was browsing at  
the door.

### GOATHERD

How does she bear her grief? There  
is not a shepherd  
But grows more gentle when he speaks  
her name,  
Remembering kindness done, and how  
can I,  
That found when I had neither goat  
nor grazing  
New welcome and old wisdom at her fire  
Till winter blasts were gone, but speak  
of her  
Even before his children and his wife.

## THE SAD SHEPHERD 31

### SHEPHERD

She goes about her house erect and  
calm  
Between the pantry and the linen  
chest,  
Or else at meadow or at grazing over-  
looks  
Her labouring men, as though her  
darling lived  
But for her grandson now; there is  
no change  
But such as I have seen upon her  
face  
Watching our shepherd sports at  
harvest-time  
When her son's turn was over.

### GOATHERD

Sing your song,  
I too have rhymed my reveries, but  
youth  
Is hot to show whatever it has found

## 32 THE SAD SHEPHERD

And till that's done can neither work  
nor wait.

Old goatherds and old goats, if in all  
else

Youth can excel them in accomplish-  
ment,

Are learned in waiting.

### SHEPHERD

You cannot but have seen  
That he alone had gathered up no gear,  
Set carpenters to work on no wide  
table,

On no long bench nor lofty milking  
shed

As others will, when first they take  
possession,

But left the house as in his father's  
time

As though he knew himself, as it were,  
a cuckoo,

No settled man. And now that he is  
gone



THE SAD SHEPHERD 33

There's nothing of him left but half  
a score  
Of sorrowful, austere, sweet, lofty pipe  
tunes.

GOATHERD

You have put the thought in rhyme.

SHEPHERD

I worked all day  
And when 'twas done so little had I  
done  
That maybe 'I am sorry' in plain  
prose  
Had sounded better to your mountain  
fancy

*[He sings.]*

' Like the speckled bird that steers  
Thousands of leagues oversea,  
And runs for a while or a while half-  
flies  
Upon his yellow legs through our  
meadows,

## 34 THE SAD SHEPHERD

He stayed for a while ; and we  
Had scarcely accustomed our ears  
To his speech at the break of day,  
Had scarcely accustomed our eyes  
To his shape in the lengthening  
    shadows,  
Where the sheep are thrown in the  
    pool,  
When he vanished from ears and eyes.  
I had wished a dear thing on that  
    day -  
I heard him first, but man is a fool.'

### GOATHERD

You sing as always of the natural  
    life,  
And I that made like music in my  
    youth  
Hearing it now have sighed for that  
    young man  
And certain lost companions of my  
    own.

THE SAD SHEPHERD 35

SHEPHERD

They say that on your barren mountain ridge  
You have measured out the road that  
the soul treads  
When it has vanished from our natural  
eyes ;  
That you have talked with apparitions.

GOATHERD

Indeed  
My daily thoughts since the first  
stupor of youth  
Have found the path my goats' feet  
cannot find.

SHEPHERD

Sing, for it may be that your thoughts  
have plucked  
Some medicable herb to make our  
grief  
Less bitter.

36      THE SAD SHEPHERD

GOATHERD

They have brought me from that  
ridge  
Seed pods and flowers that are not  
all wild poppy.

[*Sings.*

‘ He grows younger every second  
That were all his birthdays reckoned  
Much too solemn seemed ;  
Because of what he had dreamed,  
Or the ambitions that he served,  
Much too solemn and reserved.  
Jaunting, journeying  
To his own dayspring,  
He unpacks the loaded pern  
Of all ’twas pain or joy to learn,  
Of all that he had made.  
The outrageous war shall fade ;  
At some old winding whitethorn root  
He’ll practice on the shepherd’s flute,  
Or on the close-cropped grass  
Court his shepherd lass,

## THE SAD SHEPHERD 37

Or run where lads reform our day-  
time  
Till that is their long shouting play-  
time ;  
Knowledge he shall unwind  
Through victories of the mind,  
Till, clambering at the cradle side,  
He dreams himself his mother's pride,  
All knowledge lost in trance  
Of sweeter ignorance.'

### SHEPHERD

When I have shut these ewes and this  
old ram  
Into the fold, we'll to the woods and  
there  
Cut out our rhymes on strips of new-  
torn bark  
But put no name and leave them at  
her door.  
To know the mountain and the valley  
grieve

38     THE SAD SHEPHERD

May be a quiet thought to wife and  
    mother,  
And children when they spring up  
    shoulder high.

## LINES WRITTEN IN DEJECTION

WHEN have I last looked on  
The round green eyes and the long  
    wavering bodies  
Of the dark leopards of the moon?  
All the wild witches those most noble  
    ladies,  
For all their broom-sticks and their  
    tears,  
Their angry tears, are gone.  
The holy centaurs of the hills are  
    banished;  
And I have nothing but harsh sun;  
Heroic mother moon has vanished,  
And now that I have come to fifty  
    years  
I must endure the timid sun.

## THE DAWN

I WOULD be ignorant as the dawn  
That has looked down  
On that old queen measuring a town  
With the pin of a brooch,  
Or on the withered men that saw  
From their pedantic Babylon  
The careless planets in their courses,  
The stars fade out where the moon  
comes,  
And took their tablets and did sums ;  
I would be ignorant as the dawn  
That merely stood, rocking the glitter-  
ing coach  
Above the cloudy shoulders of the  
horses ;  
I would be — for no knowledge is  
worth a straw —  
Ignorant and wanton as the dawn.



## ON WOMAN

MAY God be praised for woman  
That gives up all her mind,  
A man may find in no man  
A friendship of her kind  
That covers all he has brought  
As with her flesh and bone,  
Nor quarrels with a thought  
Because it is not her own.

Though pedantry denies  
It's plain the Bible means  
That Solomon grew wise  
While talking with his queens.  
Yet never could, although  
They say he counted grass,  
Count all the praises due

When Sheba was his lass,  
When she the iron wrought, or  
When from the smithy fire  
It shuddered in the water :  
Harshness of their desire  
That made them stretch and yawn,  
Pleasure that comes with sleep,  
Shudder that made them one.  
What else He give or keep  
God grant me — no, not here,  
For I am not so bold  
To hope a thing so dear  
Now I am growing old,  
But when if the tale's true  
The Pestle of the moon  
That pounds up all anew  
Brings me to birth again —  
To find what once I had  
And know what once I have known,  
Until I am driven mad,  
Sleep driven from my bed,  
By tenderness and care,  
Pity, an aching head,

Gnashing of teeth, despair ;  
And all because of some one  
Perverse creature of chance,  
And live like Solomon  
That Sheba led a dance.

## THE FISHERMAN

ALTHOUGH I can see him still,  
The freckled man who goes  
To a grey place on a hill  
In grey Connemara clothes  
At dawn to cast his flies,  
It's long since I began  
To call up to the eyes  
This wise and simple man.  
All day I'd looked in the face  
What I had hoped 'twould be  
To write for my own race  
And the reality ;  
The living men that I hate,  
The dead man that I loved,  
The craven man in his seat,  
The insolent unreprieved,  
And no knave brought to book  
Who has won a drunken cheer,

The witty man and his joke  
Aimed at the commonest ear,  
The clever man who cries  
The catch-cries of the clown,  
The beating down of the wise  
And great Art beaten down.

Maybe a twelvemonth since  
Suddenly I began,  
In scorn of this audience,  
Imagining a man  
And his sun-freckled face,  
And grey Connemara cloth,  
Climbing up to a place  
Where stone is dark under froth,  
And the down turn of his wrist  
When the flies drop in the stream :  
A man who does not exist,  
A man who is but a dream ;  
And cried, 'Before I am old  
I shall have written him one  
Poem maybe as cold  
And passionate as the dawn.'

## THE HAWK

‘CALL down the hawk from the air ;  
Let him be hooded or caged  
Till the yellow eye has grown mild,  
For larder and spit are bare,  
The old cook enraged,  
The scullion gone wild.’

‘I will not be clapped in a hood,  
Nor a cage, nor alight upon wrist,  
Now I have learnt to be proud  
Hovering over the wood  
In the broken mist  
Or tumbling cloud.’

‘What tumbling cloud did you cleave,  
Yellow-eyed hawk of the mind,  
Last evening? that I, who had sat  
Dumbfounded before a knave,  
Should give to my friend  
A pretence of wit.’

## MEMORY

ONE had a lovely face,  
And two or three had charm,  
But charm and face were in vain  
Because the mountain grass  
Cannot but keep the form  
Where the mountain hare has lain.

## HER PRAISE

SHE is foremost of those that I would  
hear praised.

I have gone about the house, gone up  
and down

As a man does who has published a  
new book

Or a young girl dressed out in her new  
gown,

And though I have turned the talk by  
hook or crook

Until her praise should be the upper-  
most theme,

A woman spoke of some new tale she  
had read,

A man confusedly in a half dream

As though some other name ran in  
his head.



She is foremost of those that I would  
hear praised.

I will talk no more of books or the long  
war

But walk by the dry thorn until I  
have found

Some beggar sheltering from the wind,  
and there

Manage the talk until her name come  
round.

If there be rags enough he will know  
her name

And be well pleased remembering it,  
for in the old days,

Though she had young men's praise  
and old men's blame,

Among the poor both old and young  
gave her praise.

## THE PEOPLE

‘WHAT have I earned for all that  
work,’ I said,

‘For all that I have done at my own  
charge?’

The daily spite of this unmannerly  
town,

Where who has served the most is  
most defamed,

The reputation of his lifetime lost

Between the night and morning. I  
might have lived,

And you know well how great the  
longing has been,

Where every day my footfall should  
have lit

In the green shadow of Ferrara wall;

Or climbed among the images of the  
past —

The unperturbed and courtly images —  
Evening and morning, the steep street  
of Urbino

To where the duchess and her people  
talked

The stately midnight through until  
they stood

In their great window looking at the  
dawn ;

I might have had no friend that could  
not mix

Courtesy and passion into one like  
those

That saw the wicks grow yellow in the  
dawn ;

I might have used the one substantial  
right

My trade allows : chosen my com-  
pany,

And chosen what scenery had pleased  
me best.'

Thereon my phoenix answered in re-  
proof,

‘The drunkards, pilferers of public  
funds,

All the dishonest crowd I had driven  
away,

When my luck changed and they dared  
meet my face,

Crawled from obscurity, and set upon  
me

Those I had served and some that I  
had fed;

Yet never have I, now nor any time,  
Complained of the people.’

All I could reply  
Was: ‘You, that have not lived in  
thought but deed,

Can have the purity of a natural force,  
But I, whose virtues are the definitions  
Of the analytic mind, can neither close  
The eye of the mind nor keep my  
tongue from speech.’

And yet, because my heart leaped at  
her words,

I was abashed, and now they come  
to mind

After nine years, I sink my head  
abashed.

## HIS PHOENIX

THERE is a queen in China, or maybe  
it's in Spain,  
And birthdays and holidays such  
praises can be heard  
Of her unblemished lineaments, a white-  
ness with no stain,  
That she might be that sprightly girl  
who was trodden by a bird ;  
And there's a score of duchesses, sur-  
passing womankind,  
Or who have found a painter to make  
them so for pay  
And smooth out stain and blemish  
with the elegance of his mind :  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let  
them have their day.

The young men every night applaud  
their Gaby's laughing eye,  
And Ruth St. Denis had more charm  
although she had poor luck,  
From nineteen hundred nine or ten,  
Pavlova's had the cry,  
And there's a player in the States who  
gathers up her cloak  
And flings herself out of the room when  
Juliet would be bride  
With all a woman's passion, a child's  
imperious way,  
And there are — but no matter if there  
are scores beside :  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let  
them have their day.

There's Margaret and Marjorie and  
Dorothy and Nan,  
A Daphne and a Mary who live in  
privacy ;  
One's had her fill of lovers, another's  
had but one,

Another boasts, 'I pick and choose  
and have but two or three.'

If head and limb have beauty and the  
instep's high and light,

They can spread out what sail they  
please for all I have to say,

Be but the breakers of men's hearts or  
engines of delight :

I knew a phoenix in my youth so let  
them have their day.

There'll be that crowd to make men  
wild through all the centuries,

And maybe there'll be some young  
belle walk out to make men wild

Who is my beauty's equal, though that  
my heart denies,

But not the exact likeness, the sim-  
plicity of a child,

And that proud look as though she  
had gazed into the burning sun,

And all the shapely body no tittle gone  
astray,



I mourn for that most lonely thing;  
    and yet God's will be done,  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let  
    them have their day.

## A THOUGHT FROM PROPERTIUS

SHE might, so noble from head  
To great shapely knees,  
The long flowing line,  
Have walked to the altar  
Through the holy images  
At Pallas Athene's side,  
Or been fit spoil for a centaur  
Drunk\_ with the unmixed wine.

## BROKEN DREAMS

THERE is grey in your hair.  
Young men no longer suddenly catch  
    their breath  
When you are passing ;  
But maybe some old gaffer mutters a  
    blessing  
Because it was your prayer  
Recovered him upon the bed of death.  
For your sole sake — that all heart's  
    ache have known,  
And given to others all heart's ache,  
From meagre girlhood's putting on  
Burdensome beauty — for your sole  
    sake  
Heaven has put away the stroke of her  
    doom,

60      BROKEN DREAMS

So great her portion in that peace you  
    make  
By merely walking in a room.

Your beauty can but leave among us  
Vague memories, nothing but mem-  
    ories.

A young man when the old men are  
    done talking

Will say to an old man, 'Tell me of  
    that lady

The poet stubborn with his passion  
    sang us

When age might well have chilled his  
    blood.'

Vague memories, nothing but mem-  
    ories,

But in the grave all, all, shall be  
    renewed.

The certainty that I shall see that  
    lady

Leaning or standing or walking

In the first loveliness of womanhood,  
And with the fervour of my youthful  
    eyes,  
Has set me muttering like a fool.

You are more beautiful than any  
    one  
And yet your body had a flaw :  
Your small hands were not beautiful,  
And I am afraid that you will run  
And paddle to the wrist  
In that mysterious, always brimming  
    lake,  
Where those that have obeyed the  
    holy law  
Paddle and are perfect; leave un-  
    changed  
The hands that I have kissed  
For old sakes' sake.

The last stroke of midnight dies.  
All day in the one chair

From dream to dream and rhyme to  
rhyme I have ranged  
In rambling talk with an image of air :  
Vague memories, nothing but mem-  
ories.

## A DEEP-SWORN VOW

OTHERS because you did not keep  
That deep-sworn vow have been friends  
    of mine ;  
Yet always when I look death in the  
    face,  
When I clamber to the heights of  
    sleep,  
Or when I grow excited with wine,  
Suddenly I meet your face.

## PRESENCES

THIS night has been so strange that it  
    seemed  
As if the hair stood up on my head.  
From going-down of the sun I have  
    dreamed  
That women laughing, or timid or  
    wild,  
In rustle of lace or silken stuff,  
Climbed up my creaking stair. They  
    had read  
All I had rhymed of that monstrous  
    thing  
Returned and yet unrequited love.  
They stood in the door and stood  
    between  
My great wood lecturn and the fire



Till I could hear their hearts beating :  
One is a harlot, and one a child  
That never looked upon man with  
    desire,  
And one it may be a queen.

## THE BALLOON OF THE MIND

HANDS, do what you're bid ;  
Bring the balloon of the mind  
That bellies and drags in the wind  
Into its narrow shed.

TO A SQUIRREL AT KYLE-  
NA-GNO

COME play with me ;  
Why should you run  
Through the shaking tree  
As though I'd a gun  
To strike you dead ?  
When all I would do  
Is to scratch your head  
And let you go.

## ON BEING ASKED FOR A WAR POEM

I THINK it better that in times like  
these

A poet keep his mouth shut, for in  
truth

We have no gift to set a statesman  
right ;

He has had enough of meddling who  
can please

A young girl in the indolence of her  
youth,

Or an old man upon a winter's night.

IN MEMORY OF ALFRED  
POLLEXFEN

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years have gone  
Since old William Pollexfen  
Laid his strong bones down in death  
By his wife Elizabeth  
In the grey stone tomb he made.  
And after twenty years they laid  
In that tomb by him and her,  
His son George, the astrologer ;  
And Masons drove from miles away  
To scatter the Acacia spray  
Upon a melancholy man  
Who had ended where his breath  
began.  
Many a son and daughter lies  
Far from the customary skies,

The Mall and Eades's grammar school,  
In London or in Liverpool ;  
But where is laid the sailor John ?  
That so many lands had known :  
Quiet lands or unquiet seas  
Where the Indians trade or Japanese.  
He never found his rest ashore,  
Moping for one voyage more.  
Where have they laid the sailor John ?

And yesterday the youngest son,  
A humorous, unambitious man,  
Was buried near the astrologer ;  
And are we now in the tenth year ?  
Since he, who had been contented  
    long,  
A nobody in a great throng,  
Decided he would journey home,  
Now that his fiftieth year had come,  
And 'Mr. Alfred' be again  
Upon the lips of common men  
Who carried in their memory  
His childhood and his family.

At all these death-beds women heard  
A visionary white sea-bird  
Lamenting that a man should die ;  
And with that cry I have raised my  
cry.

## UPON A DYING LADY

### I

#### HER COURTESY

WITH the old kindness, the old distinguished grace  
She lies, her lovely piteous head amid  
dull red hair  
Propped upon pillows, rouge on the  
pallor of her face.  
She would not have us sad because she  
is lying there,  
And when she meets our gaze her eyes  
are laughter-lit,  
Her speech a wicked tale that we may  
vie with her



## UPON A DYING LADY 73

Matching our broken-hearted wit  
against her wit,  
Thinking of saints and of Petronius  
Arbiter.

### II

#### CERTAIN ARTISTS BRING HER DOLLS AND DRAWINGS

Bring where our Beauty lies  
A new modelled doll, or drawing,  
With a friend's or an enemy's  
Features, or maybe showing  
Her features when a tress  
Of dull red hair was flowing  
Over some silken dress  
Cut in the Turkish fashion,  
Or it may be like a boy's.  
We have given the world our passion  
We have naught for death but toys.

## III

SHE TURNS THE DOLLS' FACES TO  
THE WALL

Because to-day is some religious  
festival  
They had a priest say Mass, and even  
the Japanese,  
Heel up and weight on toe, must face  
the wall  
— Pedant in passion, learned in old  
courtesies,  
Vehement and witty she had seemed—;  
the Venetian lady  
Who had seemed to glide to some in-  
trigue in her red shoes,  
Her domino, her panniered skirt copied  
from Longhi;  
The meditative critic; all are on their  
toes,  
Even our Beauty with her Turkish  
trousers on.

## UPON A DYING LADY 75

Because the priest must have like  
every dog his day  
Or keep us all awake with baying at  
the moon,  
We and our dolls being but the world  
were best away.

### IV

#### THE END OF DAY

She is playing like a child  
And penance is the play,  
Fantastical and wild  
Because the end of day  
Shows her that some one soon  
Will come from the house, and say —  
Though play is but half-done —  
‘Come in and leave the play.’ —

### V

#### HER RACE

She has not grown uncivil  
As narrow natures would

76      UPON A DYING LADY

And called the pleasures evil  
Happier days thought good ;  
She knows herself a woman  
No red and white of a face,  
Or rank, raised from a common  
Unreckonable race ;  
And how should her heart fail her  
Or sickness break her will  
With her dead brother's valour  
For an example still.

VI

HER COURAGE

When her soul flies to the predestined  
    dancing-place  
(I have no speech but symbol, the  
    pagan speech I made  
Amid the dreams of youth) let her  
    come face to face,  
While wondering still to be a shade,  
    with Grania's shade

## UPON A DYING LADY 77

All but the perils of the woodland  
flight forgot  
That made her Dermuid dear, and  
some old cardinal  
Pacing with half-closed eyelids in a  
sunny spot  
Who had murmured of Giorgione at  
his latest breath —  
Aye and Achilles, Timor, Babar, Bar-  
haim, all  
Who have lived in joy and laughed  
into the face of Death.

## VII

### HER FRIENDS BRING HER A CHRISTMAS TREE

Pardon, great enemy,  
Without an angry thought  
We've carried in our tree,  
And here and there have bought  
Till all the boughs are gay,  
And she may look from the bed

78    UPON A DYING LADY

On pretty things that may  
Please a fantastic head.  
Give her a little grace,  
What if a laughing eye  
Have looked into your face —  
It is about to die.

## EGO DOMINUS TUUS

HIC

ON the grey sand beside the shallow  
stream

Under your old wind-beaten tower,  
where still

A lamp burns on beside the open  
book

That Michael Robartes left, you walk  
in the moon

And though you have passed the best  
of life still trace

Enthralled by the unconquerable de-  
lusion

Magical shapes.

ILLE

By the help of an image  
I call to my own opposite, summon all  
That I have handled least, least looked  
upon.

HIC

And I would find myself and not an  
image.

ILLE

That is our modern hope and by its  
light  
We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive  
mind  
And lost the old nonchalance of the  
hand;  
Whether we have chosen chisel, pen  
or brush  
We are but critics, or but half create,  
Timid, entangled, empty and abashed  
Lacking the countenance of our friends.



HIC

And yet  
The chief imagination of Christendom  
Dante Alighieri so utterly found him-  
self  
That he has made that hollow face of  
his  
More plain to the mind's eye than any  
face  
But that of Christ.

ILLE

And did he find himself,  
Or was the hunger that had made it  
hollow  
A hunger for the apple on the bough  
Most out of reach? and is that spectral  
image  
The man that Lapo and that Guido  
knew?  
I think he fashioned from his opposite  
An image that might have been a  
stony face,

82     EGO DOMINUS TUUS

Staring upon a bedouin's horse-hair  
    roof

From doored and windowed cliff, or  
    half upturned

Among the coarse grass and the camel  
    dung.

He set his chisel to the hardest stone.  
Being mocked by Guido for his lecher-  
    ous life,

Derided and deriding, driven out  
To climb that stair and eat that bitter  
    bread,

He found the unpersuadable justice,  
    he found

The most exalted lady loved by a man.

Hic

Yet surely there are men who have  
    made their art

Out of no tragic war, lovers of life,  
Impulsive men that look for happiness  
And sing when they have found it.

ILLE

No, not sing,  
 For those that love the world serve it  
 in action,  
 Grow rich, popular and full of influence,  
 And should they paint or write still  
 it is action :  
 The struggle of the fly in marmalade.  
 The rhetorician would deceive his  
 neighbours,  
 The sentimentalist himself ; while art  
 Is but a vision of reality.  
 What portion in the world can the  
 artist have  
 Who has awakened from the common  
 dream  
 But dissipation and despair ?

HIC

And yet  
 No one denies to Keats love of the  
 world ;  
 Remember his deliberate happiness.

84      EGO DOMINUS TUUS

ILLE

His art is happy but who knows his  
mind?

I see a schoolboy when I think of him,  
With face and nose pressed to a sweet-  
shop window,

For certainly he sank into his grave  
His senses and his heart unsatisfied,  
And made — being poor, ailing and  
ignorant,

Shut out from all the luxury of the  
world,

The coarse-bred son of a livery stable-  
keeper —

Luxuriant song.

HIC

Why should you leave the lamp  
Burning alone beside an open book.  
And trace these characters upon the  
sands;

A style is found by sedentary toil  
And by the imitation of great masters.

ILLE

Because I seek an image, not a book.  
 Those men that in their writings are  
     most wise  
 Own nothing but their blind, stupefied  
     hearts.  
 I call to the mysterious one who yet  
 Shall walk the wet sands by the edge  
     of the stream  
 And look most like me, being indeed  
     my double,  
 And prove of all imaginable things  
 The most unlike, being my anti-self,  
 And standing by these characters  
     disclose  
 All that I seek; and whisper it as  
     though  
 He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud  
 Their momentary cries before it is  
     dawn,  
 Would carry it away to blasphemous  
     men.

## A PRAYER ON GOING INTO MY HOUSE

God grant a blessing on this tower  
and cottage  
And on my heirs, if all remain un-  
spoiled,  
No table, or chair or stool not simple  
enough  
For shepherd lads in Galilee; and  
grant  
That I myself for portions of the  
year  
May handle nothing and set eyes on  
nothing  
But what the great and passionate  
have used  
Throughout so many varying centuries.

We take it for the norm ; yet should  
I dream

Sinbad the sailor's brought a painted  
chest,

Or image, from beyond the Loadstone  
Mountain

That dream is a norm ; and should  
some limb of the devil

Destroy the view by cutting down an  
ash

That shades the road, or setting up a  
cottage

Planned in a government office,  
shorten his life,

Manacle his soul upon the Red Sea  
bottom.

## THE PHASES OF THE MOON

*An old man cocked his ear upon a  
bridge;  
He and his friend, their faces to the  
South,  
Had trod the uneven road. Their boots  
were soiled,  
Their Connemara cloth worn out of  
shape;  
They had kept a steady pace as though  
their beds,  
Despite a dwindling and late risen moon,  
Were distant. An old man cocked his  
ear.*

AHERNE

WHAT made that sound?



## THE PHASES OF THE MOON 89

ROBARTES

A rat or water-hen  
Splashed, or an otter slid into the  
stream.

We are on the bridge; that shadow  
is the tower,

And the light proves that he is reading  
still.

He has found, after the manner of his  
kind,

Mere images; chosen this place to  
live in

Because, it may be, of the candle light  
From the far tower where Milton's  
platonist

Sat late, or Shelley's visionary prince :  
The lonely light that Samuel Palmer  
engraved,

An image of mysterious wisdom won  
by toil;

And now he seeks in book or manu-  
script

What he shall never find.

## 90 THE PHASES OF THE MOON

### AHERNE

Why should not you  
Who know it all ring at his door, and  
    speak  
Just truth enough to show that his  
    whole life  
Will scarcely find for him a broken  
    crust  
Of all those truths that are your daily  
    bread ;  
And when you have spoken take the  
    roads again ?

### ROBARTES

He wrote of me in that extravagant  
    style  
He had learnt from Pater, and to  
    round his tale  
Said I was dead ; and dead I chose  
    to be.

## THE PHASES OF THE MOON 91

AHERNE

Sing me the changes of the moon once  
more ;

True song, though speech : 'mine  
author sung it me.'

ROBARTES

Twenty-and-eight the phases of the  
moon,

The full and the moon's dark and all  
the crescents,

Twenty-and-eight, and yet but six-  
and-twenty

The cradles that a man must needs be  
rocked in :

For there's no human life at the full  
or the dark.

From the first crescent to the half, the  
dream

But summons to adventure and the  
man

## 92 THE PHASES OF THE MOON

Is always happy like a bird or a beast ;  
But while the moon is rounding to-  
wards the full

He follows whatever whim's most  
difficult

Among whims not impossible, and  
though scarred

As with the cat-o'-nine-tails of the  
mind,

His body moulded from within his  
body

Grows comelier. Eleven pass, and  
then

Athenae takes Achilles by the hair,  
Hector is in the dust, Nietzsche is born,  
Because the heroes' crescent is the  
twelfth.

And yet, twice born, twice buried,  
grow he must,

Before the full moon, helpless as a  
worm.

The thirteenth moon but sets the soul  
at war

## THE PHASES OF THE MOON 93

In its own being, and when that war's  
begun

There is no muscle in the arm; and  
after

Under the frenzy of the fourteenth  
moon

The soul begins to tremble into still-  
ness,

To die into the labyrinth of itself

### AHERNE

Sing out the song; sing to the end,  
and sing

The strange reward of all that disci-  
pline.

### ROBARTES

All thought becomes an image and  
the soul

Becomes a body: that body and that  
soul

Too perfect at the full to lie in a  
cradle,

## 94 THE PHASES OF THE MOON

Too lonely for the traffic of the world :  
Body and soul cast out and cast away  
Beyond the visible world.

AHERNE

All dreams of the soul  
End in a beautiful man's or woman's  
body.

ROBARTES

Have you not always known it?

AHERNE

The song will have it  
That those that we have loved got  
their long fingers  
From death, and wounds, or on Sinai's  
top,  
Or from some bloody whip in their  
own hands.  
They ran from cradle to cradle till  
at last

## THE PHASES OF THE MOON 95

Their beauty dropped out of the  
loneliness  
Of body and soul.

ROBARTES

The lovers' heart knows that.

AHERNE

It must be that the terror in their eyes  
Is memory or foreknowledge of the  
hour  
When all is fed with light and heaven  
is bare.

ROBARTES

When the moon's full those creatures  
of the full  
Are met on the waste hills by country  
men  
Who shudder and hurry by: body  
and soul  
Estranged amid the strangeness of  
themselves,

## 96 THE PHASES OF THE MOON

Caught up in contemplation, the  
mind's eye  
Fixed upon images that once were  
thought,  
For separate, perfect, and immovable  
Images can break the solitude  
Of lovely, satisfied, indifferent eyes.

*And thereupon with aged, high-pitched  
voice  
Aherne laughed, thinking of the man  
within,  
His sleepless candle and laborious pen.*

### ROBARTES

And after that the crumbling of the  
moon.  
The soul remembering its loneliness  
Shudders in many cradles; all is  
changed,  
It would be the World's servant, and  
as it serves,



## THE PHASES OF THE MOON 97

Choosing whatever task's most difficult  
Among tasks not impossible, it takes  
Upon the body and upon the soul  
The coarseness of the drudge.

### AHERNE

Before the full  
It sought itself and afterwards the  
world.

### ROBARTES

Because you are forgotten, half out  
of life,  
And never wrote a book your thought  
is clear.  
Reformer, merchant, statesman,  
learned man,  
Dutiful husband, honest wife by turn,  
Cradle upon cradle, and all in flight  
and all  
Deformed because there is no de-  
formity  
But saves us from a dream.

## 98 THE PHASES OF THE MOON

AHERNE

And what of those  
That the last servile crescent has set  
free?

ROBARTES

Because all dark, like those that are  
all light,  
They are cast beyond the verge, and  
in a cloud,  
Crying to one another like the bats;  
And having no desire they cannot tell  
What's good or bad, or what it is to  
triumph  
At the perfection of one's own obedi-  
ence;  
And yet they speak what's blown into  
the mind;  
Deformed beyond deformity, un-  
formed,  
Insidious as the dough before it is baked,  
They change their bodies at a word.

## THE PHASES OF THE MOON 99

AHERNE

And then?

ROBARTES

When all the dough has been so  
    kneaded up  
That it can take what form cook  
    Nature fancy  
The first thin crescent is wheeled  
    round once more.

AHERNE

But the escape; the song's not finished  
    yet.

ROBARTES

Hunchback and saint and fool are  
    the last crescents.  
The burning bow that once could  
    shoot an arrow  
Out of the up and down, the wagon  
    wheel

## 100 THE PHASES OF THE MOON

Of beauty's cruelty and wisdom's  
chatter,  
Out of that raving tide is drawn  
betwixt  
Deformity of body and of mind.

### AHERNE

Were not our beds far off I'd ring the  
bell,  
Stand under the rough roof-timbers  
of the hall  
Beside the castle door, where all is  
stark  
Austerity, a place set out for wisdom  
That he will never find; I'd play a  
part;  
He would never know me after all  
these years  
But take me for some drunken country  
man;  
I'd stand and mutter there until he  
caught

THE PHASES OF THE MOON 101

‘Hunchback and saint and fool,’ and  
that they came  
Under the three last crescents of the  
moon,  
And then I’d stagger out. He’d crack  
his wits  
Day after day, yet never find the  
meaning.

*And then he laughed to think that what  
seemed hard  
Should be so simple — a bat rose from  
the hazels  
And circled round him with its squeaky  
cry,  
The light in the tower window was put  
out.*

## THE CAT AND THE MOON

THE cat went here and there  
And the moon spun round like a top,  
And the nearest kin of the moon  
The creeping cat looked up.  
Black Minnaloushe stared at the moon,  
For wander and wail as he would  
The pure cold light in the sky  
Troubled his animal blood.  
Minnaloushe runs in the grass,  
Lifting his delicate feet.  
Do you dance, Minnaloushe, do you  
    dance?  
When two close kindred meet  
What better than call a dance,  
Maybe the moon may learn,  
Tired of that courtly fashion,

## THE CAT AND THE MOON 103

A new dance turn.

Minnaloushe creeps through the grass  
From moonlit place to place,  
The sacred moon overhead  
Has taken a new phase.

Does Minnaloushe know that his pupils  
Will pass from change to change,  
And that from round to crescent,  
From crescent to round they range ?  
Minnaloushe creeps through the grass  
Alone, important and wise,  
And lifts to the changing moon  
His changing eyes.

## THE SAINT AND THE HUNCHBACK

### HUNCHBACK

STAND up and lift your hand and  
bless

A man that finds great bitterness  
In thinking of his lost renown.  
A Roman Caesar is held down  
Under this hump.

### SAINT

God tries each man  
According to a different plan.  
I shall not cease to bless because  
I lay about me with the taws  
That night and morning I may thrash



Greek Alexander from my flesh,  
Augustus Caesar, and after these  
That great rogue Alcibiades.

HUNCHBACK

To all that in your flesh have stood  
And blessed, I give my gratitude,  
Honoured by all in their degrees,  
But most to Alcibiades.

## TWO SONGS OF A FOOL

### I

A SPECKLED cat and a tame hare  
Eat at my hearthstone  
And sleep there ;  
And both look up to me alone  
For learning and defence  
As I look up to Providence.

I start out of my sleep to think  
Some day I may forget  
Their food and drink ;  
Or, the house door left unshut,  
The hare may run till it's found  
The horn's sweet note and the tooth  
of the hound.

I bear a burden that might well try  
Men that do all by rule,

## TWO SONGS OF A FOOL 107

And what can I  
That am a wandering witted fool  
But pray to God that He ease  
My great responsibilities.

### II

I slept on my three-legged stool by  
the fire,  
The speckled cat slept on my knee;  
We never thought to enquire  
Where the brown hare might be,  
And whether the door were shut.  
Who knows how she drank the wind  
Stretched up on two legs from the mat,  
Before she had settled her mind  
To drum with her heel and to leap :  
Had I but awakened from sleep  
And called her name she had heard,  
It may be, and had not stirred,  
That now, it may be, has found  
The horn's sweet note and the tooth  
of the hound.

## ANOTHER SONG OF A FOOL

THIS great purple butterfly,  
In the prison of my hands,  
Has a learning in his eye  
Not a poor fool understands.

Once he lived a schoolmaster  
With a stark, denying look,  
A string of scholars went in fear  
Of his great birch and his great book.

Like the clangour of a bell,  
Sweet and harsh, harsh and sweet,  
That is how he learnt so well  
To take the roses for his meat.

## THE DOUBLE VISION OF MICHAEL ROBARTES

### I

ON the grey rock of Cashel the mind's  
eye  
Has called up the cold spirits that are  
born  
When the old moon is vanished from  
the sky  
And the new still hides her horn.

Under blank eyes and fingers never  
still  
The particular is pounded till it is  
man,  
When had I my own will?  
Oh, not since life began.

110     MICHAEL ROBARTES

Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent  
                    and unbent

By these wire-jointed jaws and limbs  
                    of wood,

Themselves obedient,

Knowing not evil and good ;

Obedient to some hidden magical  
                    breath.

They do not even feel, so abstract are  
                    they,

So dead beyond our death,

Triumph that we obey.

II

On the grey rock of Cashel I suddenly  
                    saw

A Sphinx with woman breast and lion  
                    paw,

A Buddha, hand at rest,

Hand lifted up that blest ;

And right between these two a girl  
                    at play

That it may be had danced her life  
away,  
For now being dead it seemed  
That she of dancing dreamed.

Although I saw it all in the mind's eye  
There can be nothing solider till I die;  
I saw by the moon's light  
Now at its fifteenth night.

One lashed her tail; her eyes lit by  
the moon  
Gazed upon all things known, all  
things unknown,  
In triumph of intellect  
With motionless head erect.

That other's moonlit eyeballs never  
moved,  
Being fixed on all things loved, all  
things unloved,  
Yet little peace he had  
For those that love are sad.

112 MICHAEL ROBARTES

Oh, little did they care who danced  
    between,  
And little she by whom her dance was  
    seen

So that she danced. No thought,  
Body perfection brought,

For what but eye and ear silence the  
    mind  
With the minute particulars of man-  
    kind?  
Mind moved yet seemed to stop  
As 'twere a spinning-top.

In contemplation had those three so  
    wrought  
Upon a moment, and so stretched it  
    out  
That they, time overthrown,  
Were dead yet flesh and bone.



III

I knew that I had seen, had seen at  
last  
That girl my unremembering nights  
hold fast  
Or else my dreams that fly,  
If I should rub an eye,

And yet in flying fling into my meat  
A crazy juice that makes the pulses  
beat  
As though I had been undone  
By Homer's Paragon

Who never gave the burning town a  
thought;  
To such a pitch of folly I am brought,  
Being caught between the pull  
Of the dark moon and the full,

114    MICHAEL ROBARTES

The commonness of thought and  
images

That have the frenzy of our western  
seas.

Thereon I made my moan,  
And after kissed a stone,

And after that arranged it in a song  
Seeing that I, ignorant for so long,  
Had been rewarded thus  
In Cormac's ruined house.

## NOTE

*“Unpack the loaded pern,”* p. 36.

WHEN I was a child at Sligo I could see above my grandfather's trees a little column of smoke from “the pern mill,” and was told that “pern” was another name for the spool, as I was accustomed to call it, on which thread was wound. One could not see the chimney for the trees, and the smoke looked as if it came from the mountain, and one day a foreign sea-captain asked me if that was a burning mountain.

W. B. Y.



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